



NEWS RELEASE

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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES OVER \$703 MILLION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

WASHINGTON, August 20, 2002 – Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced \$703 million in economic development projects to strengthen rural communities throughout the United States, as part of the Bush Administration's ongoing commitment to invest and bolster programs for rural America. The 377 projects being announced in 47 states and Puerto Rico will build and upgrade water and waste disposal facilities and will provide clean drinking water to improve the quality of life for thousands of residents and businesses in rural communities.

"Rural America is an integral part of this nation's economic fabric and President Bush is committed to programs that create jobs and spur investment and economic growth," said Veneman. "These projects will provide critical infrastructure funding that will help residents and businesses in rural communities, as well as create jobs and more investment in these areas."

Veneman made the announcement one week after participating in the President's Economic Forum in Waco, Texas, where the Administration discussed how to strengthen the nation's economy and create new jobs to help working families. The projects being announced today will be used to spur economic growth, job creation and help the environment through the building and upgrading of water and waste disposal facilities throughout the country. These projects are funded through the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

"USDA is working in a swift and thoughtful manner to implement the new farm bill," said Tom Dorr, undersecretary for Rural Development. "These projects are important for families and businesses in rural communities throughout America and will go a long way in improving water quality and the environment."

In Nebraska there will be four projects funded:

Cass County RWD #2 - This loan of \$100,000 will be used to add another well to the existing rural water system that now serves 612 users.

Johnson County RWD #1 - A loan of \$1,744,000 and a grant of \$305,000 will be used to add another well to better serve the customers already on line and allow the rural water district to add an additional 136 customers. When the project is finished, there will be a total of 481 customers.

Village of Litchfield - 148 users will benefit from the \$374,500 loan and \$316,000 grant by receiving a new water tower, rehabilitation of the present well, new distribution lines and new water meters.

Lower Republican Natural Resource District - Will receive a \$1,445,100 loan and \$1,166,100 grant to create a new rural water district in Franklin, Webster and Nuckolls counties. This rural water district will cover 130 miles and serve approximately 230 rural customers.

In FY 2002, USDA will provide nearly \$2 billion to fund more than 1,100 water and waste disposal projects in rural communities. That is up from \$1.4 billion in FY 2001.

Veneman, along with several USDA officials are participating in water and rural development events highlighting the importance of these projects to rural communities. For more information about these events and a complete list of the individual grant recipients, please call 202-690-0498 or visit USDA's Rural Development website at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

USDA Rural Development serves as the lead federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through three agencies: Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service and Rural Utilities Service.

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